

Daakaka language

Daakaka [nda:kaka] (also known as *Dakaka*, *South Ambrym* and *Baiap*) is a native language of Ambrym, Vanuatu. It is spoken by about one thousand speakers in the south-western corner of the island.

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Vitality

Most children in the region still acquire Daakaka as a first language, but it is under threat by significant socio-economic changes and the dominant use of Vanuatu's official languages, Bislama, English and French, in education and in official contexts.^[1]

Phonology

Consonants

The system of consonantal phonemes is fairly typical for the region. Voiced stops are prenasalized. The difference between bilabial consonants with and without a labio-velar release is relevant only before front vowels.

Daakaka	
Native to	Vanuatu
Region	Ambrym
Native speakers	1,000 (2012) ^[1]
Language family	Austronesian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Malayo-Polynesian ▪ Oceanic ▪ Southern Oceanic ▪ Central Vanuatu ▪ Paama-Ambrym ▪ Daakaka
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	bpa
Glottolog	daka1243 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/daka1243) ^[2]



Area where Daakaka is spoken on Ambrym

	<u>Labio-velar</u>	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>
<u>Voiceless stop</u>	p ^w	p	t		k
<u>Prenasalized stop</u>	m̚b ^w	m̚b	n̚d		n̚g
<u>Nasal</u>	m ^w	m	n		ŋ
<u>Fricative</u>		v	s		
<u>Trill</u>			r		
<u>Approximant</u>	w			j	

Vowels

There are seven phonemically distinct vowel qualities, with one long and one short vowel phoneme for each variety, plus a marginally phonemic θ [θ]. The distinction between mid and open-mid vowels is only phonemic after alveolar consonants, as in *tee* [tɛ:] "axe" vs. *téé* [te:] "see".

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>Close</u>	i, i:		u, u:
<u>Mid</u>	e, e:	(ə)	o, o:
<u>Open-mid</u>	ɛ, ɛ:		ɔ, ɔ:
<u>Open</u>		a, a:	

Word classes

The four major word classes are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Only nouns can stand in argument position, only verbs and some adjectives can be used as predicates without the copula *i*, only adjectives can be used as attributes to nouns without further modification. The two biggest word classes by far are nouns and verbs.

Nouns

There are three subclasses of nouns. The biggest subclass consists of 'general nouns' such as *em* "house" or *myaop* "volcano"; in contrast to the other two classes, these nouns do not need to specify a possessor, they cannot be inflected and they cannot be directly followed by another noun phrase. 'Inflected nouns' always indicate their possessor by a person-number ending:

kus-uk
nose.of-1S.POSS
"my nose"

Transitive or **relational nouns** also obligatorily specify an inalienable possessor, but this possessor is given by a subsequent noun phrase, not by an inflectional ending. Known, definite, non-human possessors can also be indicated by the suffix *-sye* or its allomorph *-tye*:

bwee tuwu
shell.of bush.nut

"the shell of the bush nut"

bwee-tye

shell.of-3S(n-hum).POSS

"its shell"

Verbs

Among verbs, there are several subgroups which differ either in terms of transitivity or in terms of the number of their internal argument (the subject of an intransitive verb or the object of a transitive verb).

Transitivity

There are three degrees of transitivity: verbs can be either **intransitive**, **semitransitive** or **transitive**. Intransitive verbs such as *oko* "walk" never take an object noun phrase. Semitransitive verbs can optionally be followed by an object noun phrase with indefinite reference; by contrast, transitive verbs are always interpreted to have a definite object.

Semitransitive <i>en</i> "eat":	Transitive <i>ane</i> "eat":
<i>ya=m du en</i> 3P=REAL PROG eat(SEMTR)	<i>ya=m du ane</i> 3P=REAL PROG eat(TR) "they are eating it"
<i>ya=m du en mesyu</i> 3P=REAL PROG eat(SEMTR) fish "they are eating fish"	<i>ya=m du ane mesyu</i> 3P=REAL PROG eat(TR) fish "they are eating the fish"

Pluractionality

While most verbs are neutral with regard to the number of their arguments, some verbs can take only singular arguments and some (pluractional) verbs can only take non-singular arguments. For example, *mur*, *tesi* and *medap* all mean "fall down", but only *medap* can have either a singular or a plural subject. By contrast, *mur* can only take a singular subject, while the subject of *tesi* always refers to more than one entity (starred examples, in red cells, are ungrammatical):

Singular	Pluractional	Number-neutral
<i>ó swa mu mur</i> coconut one REAL fall(SG) "one coconut fell down"	* <i>ó swa ma tesi</i> coconut one REAL fall(N-SG) intend.: "one coconut fell down"	<i>ó swa ma medap</i> coconut one REAL fall "one coconut fell down"
* <i>ó mwe pwis mu mur</i> coconut REAL be.many REAL fall(SG) intend.: "many coconuts fell down"	<i>ó mwe pwis ma tesi</i> coconut REAL be.many REAL fall(N-SG) "many coconuts fell down"	<i>ó mwe pwis ma medap</i> coconut REAL be.many REAL fall "many coconuts fell down"

Clauses

Basic clause structure

A simple assertive clause always contains a subject pronoun, a TAM marker and a predicate - except for third person singular subjects, for which there is no subject pronoun. Predicates can consist of a verb, an adjective or a copula plus noun phrase (NP) or adverbial phrase.

Third person pronouns may be preceded by a subject NP. A few examples are given below:

Subject pronoun + TAM + VP

na=m kueli me
1S= return come

"I have returned"

Subject NP + TAM + Adjective

sini ma kekei
gr.pigeon REAL small

"the green pigeon is small"

Subject NP + TAM + Copula + NP

s-ok naana mw=i tyotyo
CL3-1S.POSS mother REAL=COP snake

"my mother is a snake"

Personal Pronouns

There are two kinds of personal pronouns, subject pronouns and non-subject pronouns. Subject pronouns end in a vowel and are followed directly by a TAM marker. They are obligatory in assertive clauses. Non-subject pronouns are used as topics or objects of verbs or prepositions. Each pronoun represents a combination of a person and a number value. There are four person values: first person inclusive (including both the speaker and the listener), first person exclusive (including only the speaker, not the listener), second person (including the listener) and third person (including neither speaker nor listener). The four number values are singular (one person), dual (two persons), paucal (few persons) and plural (an arbitrarily large number of persons).

Subject pronouns

	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1ex	na	kana	kisi	kinye
1in		da	si	ra
2	ko	ka	kasi	ki
3	Ø	ya	ye	ye

Non-subject pronouns

	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1ex	nye	kenma	kinyemsi	kinyem
1in		ada	ansi	ar/er
2	ngok	kama	kamsi	kimim
3	nge	nyoo	nya	nyosi

Notes

1. Unless indicated otherwise, all information comes from [von Prince \(2012\)](#).
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "[Dakaka](#)" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/daka1243>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

Bibliography

- von Prince, Kilu (January 2015). *A Grammar of Daakaka*. De Gruyter Mouton. [ISBN 978-3-11-034259-8](#).

External links

- Database of audio recordings in Daakaka (Sesivi) - basic Catholic prayers (<http://dominicweb.eu/en/endictionaries/exotic-languages-prayers?bpa>)
- Kilu von Prince. 2017. [Daakaka dictionary](https://dictionaria.cld.org/contributions/daakaka) (<https://dictionaria.cld.org/contributions/daakaka>). *Dictionaria 1*. 1-2167. [access to raw data set: [doi:10.5281/zenodo.3668861](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3668861) (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3668861>)]

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